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each of the two meals) it requires approximately 25 *tou* to feed one man for a year, or 125 *tou* to feed a family of five persons. Taking the yield of the *mu* at 12 *tou* per year it follows that the produce of 10 *mu* (1 and 2-3rds English acres) is just sufficient to feed a family of five persons, but allows no margin for other expenditure. As the winter wheat crop also brings in a certain return it is possible for a family to live off 10 *mu*, which is confirmed by the testimony of Min Chia farmers themselves, who state that 10 *mu* is in fact the minimum holding necessary for a family to be self sufficient.

A poor farmer owning only 10 *mu* must however set aside one *tou* of his yield as seed grain, it being calculated that one *tou* of seed grain is sufficient to sow ten *mu*. It follows that most families having only 10 *mu* must in practice rent more land. Rents are paid in kind, at the rate of from five to six *tou* per *mu* of the rice crop and half a *tou* of wheat. Beans are not accepted as rent for the winter crop, wheat rents being calculated at about one tenth of rice rents, although the cash value of wheat is usually about one fifth of the price of rice out of season, and one tenth the price of rice just after the wheat harvest.

Large holdings are unknown in the Ta Li region, but many families have more than the minimum ten *mu*. Holdings of more than fifty *mu* are almost unknown, forty *mu* is the average of the most wealthy, and from this upper limit all gradations down to those who have less than five *mu*, under one English acre, are to be found. These small holdings are explained partly by the long process of subdivision occasioned by the break up of families, partly by the very high price of the land. The best rice land, that lying midway between the mountain and the lake, seils, even since the fall of values after opium suppression, for 200 Yunnan silver dollars the *mu*. At the rate of exchange prevailing before the war with Japan started, the Yunnan silver dollar was worth about

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THE RICE STANDARD

Since the war with Japan began the National Currency has 436
fallen in relation to sterling, but the internal purchasing power of the local currency has hardly altered at all. Therefore it is better to express the value of the local currency in sterling in accordance with the rate of exchange prevailing before the war, in the first half of 1937.

In calculating the value of the yield of any farm in the Ta 434
Li region it must be remembered, that as rice cannot be exported in any quantity owing to the high cost and inadequate nature of the transport, when the crop is good the price is low, and when the price is high, it is because the yield is poor. The Min Chia farmer therefore never gets the maximum return from his land which is theoretically possible, and an estimate of the income derived from rice farming must take account of this. We may take the harvest of 1938 as an example. The year was good, the crop abundant ; consequently the price of rice was low, seven nickel cents to the *sheng*, or about 2½*d.* for nine lbs. The yield was high, twelve *tou* to the *mu*, therefore,

One *tou* of ten *sheng* gives 70 nickel cents = 7 $ Nickel
One *mu* yields 12 *tou* giving 84 $ Nickel
One acre or six *mu* gives 504 $ Nickel = £6 6*s.* 0*d.*

which is not a poor return on an investment of £45 0*s.* 0*d.* A further return of about one tenth the value of the rice crop is obtained from the wheat or other winter crops.

A family of moderate means, owning 18 *mu* or three acres, 434
would therefore have harvested in 1938 crops to the value of 511
about £20 0*s.* 0*d.* If the family consisted of some five or six 427
persons, adults and children, £10 0*s.* 0*d.* worth would be consumed by themselves as food, leaving at most half the crop to sell or exchange for other commodities. The purchasing power of such a family would in other words be at most £10 0*s.* 0*d.* per annum. If however they had to rent half

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their land, and thus obtain only half the crop from that portion, their surplus for sale or exchange would only be worth £5 os. od. There are many families, about one third of the farming population, in this situation. Perhaps another third have just enough land to live on without renting, and one third, rich peasants rather than landlords, possess a surplus of land which they lease to others.

With these small margins it is obvious that very little trade can be done with the outside world, or even with other parts of the province. Very different was the situation when opium was grown as the winter crop. Opium yielded sixty catties to the *mu* and sold for 6 $ Nickel the catty. In terms of sterling this is 1s. 6d. for one and a quarter pounds. Consequently the farmer realised £4 10s. od. per *mu* for his opium crop, or £27 on the acre. When it is realised that three acres of rice and wheat only yield crops to the value of £20, the consequences of the suppression of opium become plain. The family with three acres, eighteen *mu*, used to raise opium crops to the value of £87 os. od. in addition to their rice crop worth about £18 os. od. To-day all this has disappeared and they are left with the £20 os. od. return on their wheat and rice, of which half is consumed as food.

It is remarkable in these circumstances that the value of land has only fallen by one third, a proof of the high value the Min Chia attach to land as such irrespective of the return it gives. It is also curious that when opium was permitted and gave such high returns, no attempt was made to cultivate the poppy on the mountain slopes, where it would grow very well. Even with a cash crop worth four times the value of rice the Min Chia still had their eyes fixed on the rice lands and only grew opium when rice was out of season.

The farmer who cultivates more land than he and his family can work does not always rent it out to others. He may hire labour at a fixed wage of 8 nickel cents a day and also